Gold Hill Decision Notice and Finding of No Significant Impact



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U.S. Forest Service

Northern Region

Nez Perce - Clearwater National Forest

Palouse District

Latah County, Idaho

1 Responsible Official: Stefani Spencer, Palouse District Ranger 2 1700 ID-6 3 Potlatch, ID 83855 4 For Information Contact: Chandra Neils, Project Leader 5 chandra.neils@usda.gov 6 Telephone: (208) 765-7248 7 8 9 10 11 12 In accordance with Federal civil rights law and U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) civil rights regulations and 13 policies, the USDA, its Agencies, offices, and employees, and institutions participating in or administering USDA 14 programs are prohibited from discriminating based on race, color, national origin, religion, sex, gender identity 15 (including gender expression), sexual orientation, disability, age, marital status, family/parental status, income 16 derived from a public assistance program, political beliefs, or reprisal or retaliation for prior civil rights activity, in 17 any program or activity conducted or funded by USDA (not all bases apply to all programs). Remedies and 18 complaint filing deadlines vary by program or incident. 19 Persons with disabilities who require alternative means of communication for program information (e.g., Braille, 20 large print, audiotape, American Sign Language, etc.) should contact the responsible Agency or USDA's TARGET 21 Center at (202) 720-2600 (voice and TTY) or contact USDA through the Federal Relay Service at (800) 877-8339. 22 Additionally, program information may be made available in languages other than English. 23 To file a program discrimination complaint, complete the USDA Program Discrimination Complaint Form, AD-24 3027, found online at http://www.ascr.usda.gov/complaint_filing_cust.html and at any USDA office or write a 25 letter addressed to USDA and provide in the letter all of the information requested in the form. To request a 26 copy of the complaint form, call (866) 632-9992. Submit your completed form or letter to USDA by: (1) mail: U.S. 27 Department of Agriculture, Office of the Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights, 1400 Independence Avenue, SW, 28 Washington, D.C. 20250-9410; (2) fax: (202) 690-7442; or (3) email: program.intake@usda.gov. 29 USDA is an equal opportunity provider, employer and lender. 30 31 Data Accuracy - The Forest Service uses the most current and complete data available. GIS data and product 32 accuracy may vary. They may be developed from sources of differing accuracy, accurate only at certain scales, 33 based on modeling or interpretation, incomplete while being created or revised, etc. Using GIS products for 34 purposes other than those for which they were created may yield inaccurate or misleading results. The Forest 35 Service reserves the right to correct, update, modify, or replace GIS products without notification. 36 37

Introduction

This notice documents my decision and rationale for approval of the Gold Hill project, located in the far northwestern corner of the Palouse Ranger District in Latah County, Idaho and encompassing about 2,700 acres of National Forest System lands within T42N, R4W, Sections 1, 2, 3, 10, 11; and T43N, R4W, Sections 35, 36 (Boise Meridian).

An interdisciplinary team developed a proposed action in response to the need for action in this area (Environmental Assessment, pages 5-6). The proposed action was designed to achieve the goals and objectives of the Clearwater National Forest Land and Resource Management Plan (Forest Plan), and to comply with applicable laws and regulations including the National Environmental Policy Act, National Forest Management Act, Clean Water Act, Endangered Species Act, Clean Air Act, and National Historic Preservation Act, among others.

The Gold Hill Project Environmental Assessment and supporting resource reports, project files and other documentation incorporated by reference in this document, are all available to view or download from the Nez Perce - Clearwater National Forests' website at:

15 https://www.fs.usda.gov/project/?project=56043.

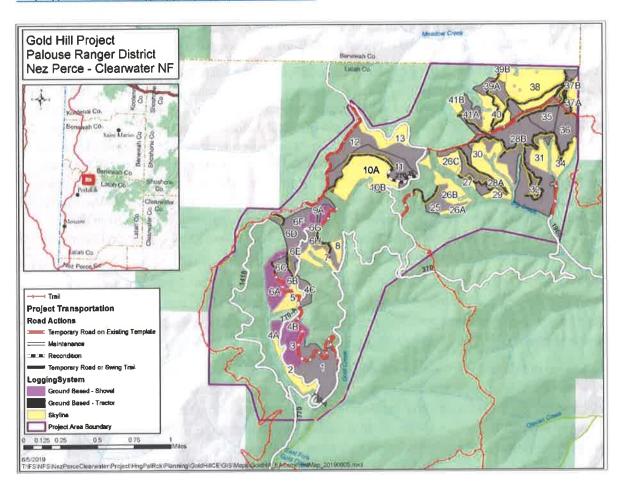


Figure 1: Gold Hill Vicinity and Activities Map

Decision and Reasons for the Decision

2 As the Responsible Official for this project, I have decided to implement the proposed action as

described in the Gold Hill Project Environmental Assessment. The Environmental Assessment is a site

specific environmental effects analysis of management activities proposed in the Gold Hill project

area. The effects analysis was based on consideration of the best available science by carefully

6 reviewing available scientific research and other information relevant to the Gold Hill project area.

7 Scientific conclusions are drawn from well-supported data sources and data availability is disclosed.

Scientific sources my staff relied upon are cited in the Environmental Assessment.

I carefully considered all of the information provided to me by the Interdisciplinary team and evaluated the effects of our proposed actions against the purpose and need for the project. I considered input we received from the public through comments received during scoping, the 30 day comment period, and at our public meeting. Given that there are widespread insect and disease infestations within the project area, I feel the action as proposed provides the greatest probability for success in creating healthy, resilient forests. Regeneration harvest is the appropriate treatment to address widespread root rot in a timber stand. Stand exams by the certified silviculturist showed these stands to be infected with root rot, mistletoe, and other diseases or insects. As the official responsible for appropriate management of the National Forest lands on the Palouse Ranger District, I feel the best approach is regeneration harvest followed by re-forestation in order to reset the stand

In addition to the forest management needs, I must evaluate the social, economic, and resource components in equal measure. Timber harvest is essential to the survival of local communities. The economic benefit the Gold Hill project will help us meet our Forest Plan management direction for providing a sustained timber yield to help support the local economy. Therefore, I have decided to move forward with the project as proposed. The No Action Alternative would not have addressed the existing insect and disease issues, allowing the stand to further degenerate. Healthy forested lands are necessary for wildlife, fisheries, clean air, clean water, and the recreating public. As the manager of the public's National Forest I cannot ignore the forest health issues within the Gold Hill project area. I understand there are tradeoffs to this approach, especially with regard to the recreating public. However, I feel these short term impacts are outweighed by the long term gain of healthier forested ecosystems and sustainable local communities.

and meet our goals of both a healthy forested ecosystem and a sustainable timber product.

In addition to the rationale discussion for the decision and Finding of No Significant Impact, all supporting data and analysis included in the Gold Hill Environmental Assessment and in the response to comment documents for both the scoping period and environmental assessment comment period are hereby incorporated by reference. These documents can be found in the project record.

This decision notice and finding of no significant impact are based on a review of the Gold Hill project Environmental Assessment, specialist reports, project file documents and related scientific literature, the Clearwater National Forest Land and Resource Management Plan, and the response to public comments received during the 15-day scoping and 30-day comment periods. I have also consulted with Nez Perce Tribal staff regarding impacts to tribal trust assets.

In summary, the decision will:

- 1. Conduct regeneration harvest on up to 825 acres. The majority of treatments will maintain and/or re-establish long-lived early seral species by reducing stand densities and addressing insect and disease infestations.
- 2. Complete activity fuel treatments on 825 acres in harvest units to reduce activity fuel and prepare harvested openings for planting.
- 3. Construct approximately 8.7 miles of temporary roads to facilitate harvest.

 These roads will be decommissioned through obliteration after use, within 5 years.
- 4. **Construct 1.3 miles of temporary roads, on existing Off-Highway Vehicle trails**, to facilitate harvest. These roads will be returned to their existing condition and legal status no later than 5 years after completing the project.
- Conduct maintenance/reconstruction as needed to accommodate log haul.

To meet the need of the project, the selected alternative includes vegetation management through timber harvest and fuel treatments. Associated road activities include temporary road construction, road improvement and maintenance including culvert replacement/removal and graveling road surfaces. The quantity of actions (acres and miles) described in this decision are approximate, and will be refined based on implementation needs.

The selected alternative includes 825 acres of commercial timber harvest. The sale of forest products resulting from management activities on National Forest System lands will contribute to the local economy and to the sustainability of the local forest products industry (Environmental Assessment, pages 2-3). The vegetation management actions are designed to shift forest vegetation conditions toward the desired conditions to establish and maintain resilient forest stand structure and species composition. Timber harvest, prescribed fire, and planting of more resilient and desired tree species will increase the presence of early seral species in response to the purpose and need identified for this area. These activities will help move forested ecosystems within the project area toward the desired conditions.

Public comments to the scoping letter and the Environmental Assessment were reviewed and considered by the Interdisciplinary Team. Responses to comments were developed and are part of the project file and available online for review. In some cases, the comments allowed the team to provide more clarity on issues not fully understood. In other cases, it helped inform the team about issues of concern to the public so they could be addressed. Using recommendations from the public during scoping and public meetings, the Interdisciplinary Team developed design criteria to minimize or avoid adverse effects that could occur as a result of implementing activities in the Gold Hill project area; those design criteria are identified in the Environmental Assessment starting on page 20. Detailed descriptions of resources, uses and conditions in the Gold Hill project area are provided in the project files.

One comment was received from the public asking for development of an alternative that excluded all road building, including temporary roads. The project, as proposed, includes temporary roads but no new permanent roads or changes to the existing permanent road system. This alternative was considered but eliminated from detailed study because it would fail to meet the forest health needs for the project.

Need for the Project

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- The actions for the Gold Hill Project (Map 1) are needed because:
 - (1) There is a need to provide economic benefit to the local community.
 - Communities surrounding the Forest have important social and economic ties to National
 Forest System lands. Forest products resulting from the management activities on National
 Forest System lands contribute to the local economy and sustainability of the local forest
 products industry.
 - Over-arching management direction includes providing sustained yield of timber and other outputs at a level that is cost-efficient and that will help support the economic structure of local communities.
 - (2) There is a need for vegetation treatments that will reduce stand densities and alter species composition to improve forest health
 - Size class and dominance types have departed from desired conditions, impacting resistance and resilience at a stand and landscape scale.
 - Root disease, most significantly Armillaria, is impacting the project area with varying mortality.

Creation of Openings Over 40 Acres

- Forest Service Manual (FSM) 2470 Supplement R1 2400-2016-1 of the Northern Region clarifies and describes the restrictions on the size of harvest openings created by even-aged silvicultural methods (clearcut, seedtree and shelter-wood harvests), as required by FSM 1921.12. Project activities would create four even-aged regeneration openings exceeding 40 acres totaling approximately 825 acres (Environmental Assessment, page 6). The public was notified through legal notice in the Lewiston Tribune on May 15, 2019 during the scoping period for this project that the required 60-day notice period was initiated. The request for Regional Forester authorization for the Nez Perce Clearwater
- National Forest to exceed the creation of openings over 40-acre policy was approved on April 17,
- 26 2020.

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Roads and Transportation

- 28 An estimated 8.7 miles of new temporary roads will be constructed to provide safe and efficient
- 29 access for timber harvest. Temporary road construction activities are similar to but less complex
- 30 than new system (permanent) road construction, and are limited to the extent necessary for safe
- operation and travel. At the conclusion of their intended use, the temporary roads will be
- decompacted, recontoured to the approximate shape of the surrounding terrain, and seeded or
- 33 covered with debris to prevent erosion and accelerate hydrologic and vegetative recovery. All
- temporary roads will be returned to their existing condition through obliteration no later than five
- 35 years after completing the project.
- Two segments of existing Off-Highway Vehicle (OHV) trails would be used as temporary roads to
- facilitate vegetation treatments and haul routes. This is approximately 1.3 miles of existing trails.

- These areas equate to about one mile of ridgetop trail on FS OHV trail 15, and about a quarter mile
- of ridgetop trail on FS OHV trail 19. These Off-Highway Vehicle trail segments, after being converted
- temporarily to access the project area, will be returned to their existing condition and legal status no
- 4 later than five years after completing the project.
- Road construction and reconstruction will be designed to standards appropriate for the intended use
- 6 while considering safety, costs of transportation, and potential to impact resources, in compliance
- 7 with (16 U.S. Code 1608(b) and (c)) and to make progress toward achieving forest wide desired
- 8 conditions. Only the road improvements needed to complete the treatments will be implemented.
- 9 Road Improvements on haul routes are expected to reduce or eliminate chronic sediment sources.

Best Management Practices and Standard Operating

Procedures

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- 12 The proposed action was designed by the project Interdisciplinary Team to minimize or avoid
- adverse effects during project implementation (Environmental Assessment, Appendix A). Specific
- design features for this project are based on law, regulation, policy and Forest Plan direction, best
- available science, site specific evaluations, and public input; and would be applied during project
- 16 implementation.
- 17 Additionally, applicable Best Management Practices will be applied to activities proposed in the
- project area. Best Management Practices are practices, techniques, or measures determined to be
- the most effective, practicable means of protecting soil and aquatic resources. Contract provisions
- that are requirements in timber sales are the mechanism by which Best Management Practices are
- 21 implemented during project activities. Best Management Practices have been developed for the
- 22 project activities based on the proposed activities and site specific conditions in order to avoid or
- 23 minimize potential adverse effects.
- As part of my review of the project I considered the recreational use of the area. As previously
- 25 mentioned, there will be temporary impact to two Off-Highway Vehicle trails which will be converted
- 26 to temporary roads. Those will revert to their current condition and status upon completion of
- activities. It is my intent that the impact to recreational users will be kept to a minimum through
- 28 efficient implementation.
- The Interdisciplinary Team has participated in staff-to-staff meetings with the Nez Perce Tribe for the
- 30 purpose of sharing information and having an informed dialogue related to the concerns of the Tribe.

Alternatives Considered

No Action

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- This alternative proposed no actions. Selection of this alternative would not preclude approved
- activities in other areas of the National Forest at this time or from the Gold Hill project area at some
- time in the future. This alternative represented the existing condition if no actions were to take place
- and provided a comparison of effects.

The Proposed Action

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- 2 This reflects our original action proposed in scoping, as adjusted based on further field
- 3 reconnaissance, refinement of data, and public comments received through scoping and the
- 4 Environmental Assessment comment period. Refer to the Environmental Assessment(pages 5–8) for a
- detailed description of activities that were proposed under the proposed action.

6 Public Involvement (36 CFR 220.7(c))

- 7 The public was notified of the 15 day scoping period through legal notice posted in the Lewiston
- 8 Tribune on May 15, 2019. During the scoping period, on May 28, 2019, the Palouse Ranger District
- 9 hosted a public meeting. The public was invited to learn more about the project, interact with
- specialists, ask questions and provide input and ideas. The Environmental Assessment was released to
- the public for a 30 day comment period on August 25, 2019.

Findings Required by Law, Regulation and Policy

- 13 The project is consistent with all relevant federal and state laws and regulations, as described in the
- 14 Environmental Assessment, including but not limited to:
- National Forest Management Act
- Endangered Species Act
- Clean Water Act, Idaho State Water Quality Standards, Idaho Stream Channel Protection Act,
- 18 Executive Order 11988 -Protection of Floodplains, and Executive Order 11990- Protection of
- 19 Wetlands
- Idaho Forest Practices Act
- Executive Order 13112 Invasive Species
- Clean Air Act and National Cohesive Wildland Fire Management Strategy
- Idaho Roadless Rule
- National Historic Preservation Act
- Executive Order 12898-Environmental Justice

Draft Finding of No Significant Impact

- 27 As the responsible official, I am responsible for evaluating the effects of the project relative to the
- definition of significance established by the CEQ Regulations (40 CFR 1508.13). I have reviewed and
- 29 considered the Environmental Assessment and documentation included in the project record, and I
- 30 have determined that the proposed action will not have a significant effect on the quality of the
- 31 human environment. As a result, no environmental impact statement will be prepared. My rationale
- for this finding is as follows, organized by sub-section of the CEQ definition of significance cited above.

Context

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- 2 Context means the significance of an action must be considered on several levels: society as a whole,
- 3 the affected region, the affected interests, and the locality. For the proposed action and alternatives,
- 4 the context of the environmental effects is based on the environmental analysis in the Environmental
- Assessment. The effects of the proposed action are limited in context to the affected interests and the
- locality. They are not likely to significantly affect regional or national resources. The ecological impacts
- of the proposed action are localized and not significant in either the short or long term. Social impacts
- 8 are also localized and may affect individuals but are not significant.

Physical (land, water and air)

- 10 The land, water and air resources would be protected and maintained in both the No Action and the
- proposed action. Impacts to soil would occur under the proposed action but would not exceed
- 12 established standards. Water resources would receive protection through buffers and improved road
- surfaces. This would help the TMDL listed stream Gold Creek. Air resources would be maintained and
- protected through use of design features and compliance with region air quality standards.

Biological (plants, wildlife and fish)

- Plants and wildlife would be affected under both alternatives. The no action alternative would affect
- plants by leaving in place the conditions for further spread of existing diseases. This would result in the
- further deterioration of forested stands and continued or increased insect activity in the project area
- 19 resulting in greater mortality.
- The proposed action would address the current disease issues in the project area, primarily through
- 21 regeneration harvests. These stands would be revegetated with species that are more resistant to
- insect, disease, drought and wildfire.
- 23 Wildlife in the area would be affected by the no action alternative as the disease agents in the
- forested stands continue to impact mortality. The proposed action would affect wildlife through the
- changes in forest stands. The impacts of both alternatives vary by species and is detailed in the wildlife
- specialist report. Neither alternative creates an impact that rises to the level of significance.
- 27 The proposed action would not measurably affect fish/aquatic habitat in the project area. Water
- resources would be protected and maintained in both the no action and the proposed action
- alternatives. Neither alternative creates an impact that rises to the level of significance for fish and/or
- 30 fish/aquatic habitat.

Economic

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- The no action alternative would not meet a primary objective for the project. Delaying treatment for
- the area would delay the economic benefits of providing high quality forest products to the local
- community. An economic benefit from recreation in the area would continue. The proposed action
- would access economic benefits from logging and continue to benefit economically from recreation.

Social

- 37 The impacts to the social context are roughly the same for both alternatives. The no action alternative
- 38 would continue to allow current recreational opportunities. The proposed action would have a short
- term impact on recreationalists because of short term closures for safe harvest activities. Upon
- 40 completion of planned activities, utilized trails would be restored and made available for recreation
- 41 use again.

Intensity

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 Intensity is a measure of the severity, extent, or quantity of effects, and is based on information from the effects analysis of this Environmental Assessment and the references in the project record. The effects of this project have been appropriately and thoroughly considered with an analysis that is responsive to concerns and issues raised by the public. The agency has taken a hard look at the environmental effects using relevant scientific information and knowledge of site-specific conditions gained from field visits. My finding of no significant impact is based on the context of the project and intensity of effects using the ten factors identified in 40 CFR 1508.27(b).

Impacts that may be both beneficial and adverse. A significant effect may exist even if the Federal agency believes that on balance the effect will be beneficial.

The effects section of the Environmental Assessment state that vegetation treatments in the proposed action will have a long-term beneficial effect to the forested vegetation by reducing the extent of insect and disease infestations on 825 acres. The resulting environment will be more resilient to these stressors in the future. Other beneficial effects have been identified for wildlife and recreation in the long term.

The degree to which the proposed action affects public health or safety.

Water quality will be protected with design features and Best Management Practices as described in the Environmental Analysis and the Hydrology Resources project record documents.

Unique characteristics of the geographic area such as the proximity to historical or cultural resources, parklands, prime farmlands, wetlands, wild and scenic rivers, or ecologically critical areas.

All project activities will be conducted consistent with the National Historic Preservation Act and the Clearwater National Forest Plan. The implementation of these activities would result in "no effect" to historic or cultural resources. There are no wild and scenic rivers or ecologically critical areas in proximity to the project area.

The degree to which the effects on the quality of the human environment are likely to be highly controversial.

In National Environmental Policy Act context, "highly controversial" does not encompass all public opposition to a proposed action, but instead only applies to a substantial dispute as to the size, nature, or effect of an action.¹

My staff examined current relevant science regarding insect and disease risk, soil protection, wildlife habitat and patterns of use, invasive species, sensitive and rare plants, sediment, fisheries, visual integrity, fire ecology, and the literature provided by the public in their comments. To minimize potential adverse effects and controversy I have incorporated recommendations from the scientific literature and public comments into the action alternatives. As previously stated, I have avoided sensitive areas; applied resource protection measures; and included restoration

Indiana Forest Alliance, Inc. v. United States Forest Service 325 F.3d 851 (10th Cir2003) citing Wetlands Action Network v. United States Army Corps of Engineers, 222 F.3d 1105 (9th Cir.2000); Blue Mountains Biodiversity Project v. Blackwood, 161 F.3d 1208, 1212 (9th Cir.1998) citing Greenpeace Action v. Franklin, 14 F.3d 1324, 1335 (9th Cir.1993)); Sierra Club v. United States Forest Service, 843 F.2d 1190, 1193 (9th Cir.1988) (accord); LaFlamme v. Federal Energy Regulatory Commission, 852 F.2d 389, 400-01 (9th Cir.1988)

activities into the project design. Therefore, I believe I have addressed the resource concerns raised in public comments.

Based on the limited context of the project compared to the identified need, review of the public comments received to date, the scientific literature, and the analysis documented in the Environmental Assessment and the Project File, I do not find any highly controversial effects to the human environment.

The degree to which the possible effects on the human environment are highly uncertain or involve unique or unknown risks.

The Gold Hill project proposes similar activities to those that have been ongoing for decades. Effects to the human environment are well known and do not involve unique or unknown risks.

The degree to which the action may establish precedent for future actions with significant effects or represents a decision in principle about a future consideration.

The Gold Hill project represents a site-specific project that does not set precedent for future actions or present a decision in principle about future considerations. Any proposed future project must be evaluated on its own merits and effects.

Whether the action is related to other actions with individually insignificant but cumulatively significant impacts. Significance exists if it is reasonable to anticipate a cumulatively significant impact on the environment. Significance cannot be avoided by terming an action temporary or by breaking it down into small component parts.

The Environmental Assessment considered potential cumulative effects of this proposal on natural resources. The Biological Evaluations considered cumulative effects of the proposed actions on sensitive fish, wildlife, and plants. These analyses considered past, present, and reasonably foreseeable future activities for evaluation of cumulative effects. These documents and the analysis disclosed in the Environmental Assessment support the finding that this proposal would not cause significant cumulative effects on biological or physical resources, even when considered in relation to other actions (Environmental Assessment, pages 8-18, specialist reports located in the project record).

The degree to which the action may adversely affect districts, sites, highways, structures, or objects listed in or eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places or may cause loss or destruction of significant scientific, cultural, or historic resources.

The project area has been surveyed and a comprehensive Cultural Resources Report (project record) had been prepared. Consultation with the State Historic Preservation Officer has been completed. Protection of heritage resources in the area was incorporated into the design features of the project (Environmental Assessment, page 16).

The degree to which the action may adversely affect an endangered or threatened species or its habitat that has been determined to be critical under the Endangered Species Act of 1973.

There are no Federally listed fish or wildlife or designated critical habitat present in the project area so no consultation under Section 7 of the Endangered Species Act was required.

Whether the action threatens a violation of Federal, State, or local law or requirements imposed for the
 protection of the environment.

The Gold Hill project proposed action complies with Federal, State, and local laws and requirements imposed for the protection of the environment. These include the Clean water Act, Wetlands and Floodplains Executive Orders, the Endangered Species Act, The National Historic Preservation Act, the National Environmental Policy Act, and the National Forest Management Act. The proposed action complies with all Forest Plan desired conditions, objectives, standards, and guidelines (documented in E1.1 of the project file).

Pre-decisional Administrative Review Process

One objection was received for the Gold Hill project. Friends of the Clearwater and the Alliance for the Wild Rockies jointly submitted. In their objection they raised 6 main issues with contentions.

Issue 1 – National Environmental Policy Act

The objectors claimed that the Environmental Assessment did not disclose the existing condition of the project area or incorporate results of past monitoring into the analysis, resulting in inadequate cumulative effects analysis in violation of the National Environmental Policy Act. They also claimed that the Environmental Assessment did not disclose the effects to climate change from logging or consider the science or comments provided during the comment period. They contended this was a reliance on incorrect assumptions for insects and disease, fire and the use of logging that resulted in a failure to take a "hard look" in violation of the National Environmental Policy Act.

In response to the objector's claims, the interdisciplinary team further clarified where the documentation was located in the project file for existing conditions and monitoring results. The responses to comments received, including the review of literature received, was made publicly available. A carbon cycling and storage report was added to the project file (E10.C1) to address concerns with climate change. As a result, the objection review panel did not find violations of the National Environmental Policy Act.

Issue 2 – National Forest Management Act

The objector's claimed that using project specific desired conditions not listed in the Forest Plan is a violation of the Forest Plan.

The objection review panel did not find a violation of the Forest Plan. The project was found to be in compliance with the Desired Future Condition stated in the Forest Plan (E5H67, pages II-18, paragraph 3).

Issue 3 - Elk Analysis

Objector's claim violations of the National Forest Management Act due to lack of adherence to the E1 Management Are standards, and the National Environmental Policy Act because they did not believe there was information supporting the conclusion that the project will leave the minimum 25 percent cover for elk.

1 2 3	The objection panel did not find a violation of the National Forest Management Act or the National Environmental Policy Act. The project is in game management unit 8, which is not managed for elk. It is managed for white-tail deer. The standard for 25 percent cover does not apply.
4	Issue 4 – Soils
5 6 7	Objector's contended that the soils information did not include existing condition or show that it met Forest Plan or regional standards and was therefore a violation of the National Environmental Policy Act and the National Forest Management Act.
8 9 10 11	While the information was included in the analysis, the soil specialist did update the report to make it more clear what the existing condition was and how it was used. A methodology paper was also added to the record for clarity (E6_26). Clarifying information was also added to the Environmental Assessment to show that it met the Forest Plan and regional standards (E6_25 and E6_24).
13	Issue 5 –Vegetation and Old Growth
14 15 16	Objectors contended that the National Environmental Policy Act was violated through a misapplication of science in the preference of early seral species. They also claim the Forest Plan was violated by not maintaining 5 percent western redcedar on lands where it grows.
17 18	The objection review panel did not find a violation of the National Environmental Policy Act or the Forest Plan.
19	Issue 6 – Objector Literature
20 21 22	No new literature was submitted with the objection and all previously submitted literature was reviewed and responded to in E1.2 Scoping comment response and E1.5 Environmental Assessment comment response.
23	
24	Contact Information
25 26	For more information about the Gold Hill project contact Project Leader, Chandra Neils at (208) 765-7248 or chandra.neils@usda.gov .
27 28 29	The Environmental Assessment, Decision Notice and Finding of No Significant Impact and maps can be obtained at: http://www.fs.fed.us/nepa/nepa_project_exp.php?project=56043 or stop by the Palouse Ranger District at 1700 ID-6, Potlatch, Idaho.
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31 32	Approved by: Styland Spencer STEFANI SPENCER Date
33	Palouse District Ranger

Nez Perce - Clearwater National Forest

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